

## **ADVISE FOR DOG OWNERS WHEN WALKING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

### **Recommendations for dog owners using public rights of way and access land.**

Walking keeps you and your dog happy and healthy. Did you know that walking only 30 minutes every day makes you feel good, gives you more energy, helps to reduce stress, can lower blood pressure and helps keep your heart in good working order.

When you are out with your dog please be aware of the following issues:

#### **Dog fouling**

Please be responsible and don't let your dog foul a public right of way or open access land. If it does owners have a responsibility to clear up after their pets. Bagnall is covered by a **Public Space Protection Order (Dog Fouling and Nuisance) 2020** which could lead to fines and/or prosecutions to owners who do not clear up after their dog(s).

Dog mess can spread some very nasty infections and diseases and a pile of dog poo can contain one million microscopic Toxocara Eggs. Toxocaris is highly infectious, especially to children. Typical Toxocaris symptoms include dizziness and nausea, asthma and epileptic seizures. More seriously, it can lead to serious eye damage, even permanent blindness.

Dog mess, especially from unwormed dogs, also harbours parasites that can harm farm animals especially cows and sheep. If your dog is caught short, please clear up its mess and dispose of it in a dog bin. If there isn't a bin near by, please don't leave it behind on the path or hang it on a tree in a bag. Instead, dispose of it safely at home by double wrapping it and putting it in your standard household refuse.

The countryside is used by children, cyclists, wheelchair and pushchair users throughout the year - and everyone has the right to enjoy the countryside.

#### **Walkers and dogs in the same field as livestock**

If you meet farm animals while out walking keep your dog on its lead and under close control and leave as much space between your dog and the animals as possible (don't worry too much about keeping to the line of the path).

If cattle do start acting aggressively (most common when calves are with them), it's best to let go of your dog and let it run away but most importantly you should leave the field as quickly as you can.

#### **Dogs and farmland**

Dogs accompanying walkers on public rights of way must be kept in sight and under close control and should not be allowed to stray off the path. Straying, or worrying of livestock is a serious offence and landowners can take direct action.

It is unfortunately too common that some dogs will worry or even attack farm stock. For example, sheep may well move away to avoid dogs which may encourage the dogs to chase them. A loose or out of control dog could cause a pregnant ewe to miscarry or cause a newborn lamb to be separated from and rejected by its mother.

There are special rules on land designated as 'access land'. Here, whenever livestock are present, dogs should be kept on a fixed lead of less than two metres. Also in between 1 March and 31 July dogs must be kept on a two metre lead in order to protect ground nesting birds such as skylark and lapwing. These will be disturbed from their nests by free running dogs. Their eggs may then be taken by predators or fail to hatch as a result (this rule does not apply to public rights of way across access land - but it's good to follow it as it is common sense)

### **Dogs and other people (especially small children)**

It can be frightening, especially for small children, if dogs, apparently out of control, come bounding towards them - and even for adults who may not appreciate muddy paws and inquisitive noses as much as dog owners might. You may think your dog is just being friendly, but please consider other people and show mutual respect for each other by putting your dog on its lead as soon as you see people approaching.

### **Dogs and horses**

If you are out walking or riding with your dog on bridleways, restricted byways and byways, please keep a lookout for horse riders, especially on narrow sections of paths. Most people are unaware that many horses can be frightened by dogs on the loose or barking and this can have major impacts for horse, rider and other people if they rear up or take flight. The best way to avoid this is to make sure you can recall your dog at all times - by keeping them on a fixed or retractable lead or by keeping them in sight if you are confident that the dog always responds to your control command or signal - and carrying a lead and using it when passing the horse.